



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

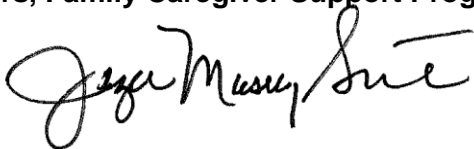
ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

JOYCE MASSEY-SMITH, MPA •
Director, Division of Aging and Adult Services

ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER: No. 21-02

TO: Area Agency on Aging Directors, Family Caregiver Support Program Specialists

FROM: Joyce Massey-Smith, Director 

DATE: March 8, 2021

SUBJECT: Family Caregiver Support Program Respite for Caregivers of Individuals Utilizing Hospice Services

The purpose of this letter is to provide programmatic guidance on how the Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) can leverage respite services to best support caregivers of individuals that are utilizing hospice services.

Background

Currently, the Medicare hospice benefit specifies payment of in-patient respite for a maximum of five days. Rarely do the services offered in home (including volunteer services, nursing care, and activities of daily living (ADL) care provided by in-home aides) allow caregivers the ability to receive beneficial respite from their care duties.

Like many other issues facing caregivers, the COVID-19 global pandemic has further exacerbated this issue. Many caregivers have been hesitant to place their loved ones in inpatient facilities for respite services, due to infection control concerns. While hospice is intended to be a “total care” service, there is a gap in service availability for their caregivers that the FCSP could help alleviate through our unique caregiving support structure.

Guidance from the Administration for Community Living (ACL)

To help remedy this caregiving need and gap in existing service, clarification was sought recently from the ACL. The following was provided on this issue:

- It is allowable for FCSP to serve caregivers on an as-needed basis who are caring for individuals that are utilizing hospice benefits for in-home respite care options.
- Hospice services are intended to provide services to the care recipient; the FCSP is intended to provide services to the caregiver.
- This is an allowable use of FCSP Respite Services funded through the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

All other previously established Respite Service eligibility criteria must be met.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES

LOCATION: 693 Palmer Drive, Taylor Hall, Raleigh, NC 27603
MAILING ADDRESS: 2101 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2101
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-855-3400 • FAX: 919-733-0443

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Program Expectations and Flexibility

It remains a programmatic expectation that the FCSP will be the payor of last resort, services will be provided in support of the caregiver, and the flexibility of FCSP services be utilized to best meet specific needs of the caregiver.

As with all services, there is flexibility to utilize program budgets so that FCSP services reflect the unique needs of caregivers in each region of the state.

Questions regarding this Administrative Letter should be directed to Laura Jane Ward, Family Caregiver Support Program Consultant at laura.ward@dhhs.nc.gov or 919-855-3417.

JMS/LJW/pg